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## DOCUMENTS

### *Diary and Memoranda of William L. Marcy, 1857*

[THE following entries in Marcy's diary, running from March 4 to April 6, 1857, are, like the entries of 1849-1851 which were printed in our April number (pp. 444-462, *ante*), supplied by Professor Thomas M. Marshall from the manuscript in the possession of Professor Charles S. Sperry. In volume LXXVII. of the Marcy Papers in the Library of Congress there is a copy of these entries. That manuscript also contains entries for April 9, 14, 17, and 18, 1857, and these have been added to Mr. Marshall's text and printed below. The further entries, however, May 14 to July 1, contain nothing of political or historical importance. ED.]

*4th Mar 57.* The ceremony of inauguration of Jas Buchanan is now going on. I am prevented from being present by lameness. The last rumour is that the cabinet [is not completed]. The Prest is reported to be vacillating in the choice between Clifford of Maine and Toucey of Conn. Mr. B. has had a full and fair opportunity to ascertain between the character of the two men, and there should be no hesitation in making the selection between the two. There is no political complication to embarrass the choice. Not so I apprehend in regard to the office of P. M. Genl. The correctness of the anticipated praise of the New President for decision of character seems to be thrown into some doubt by his course in regard to the composition of his Cabinet.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Nathan Clifford of Maine had been Attorney General, 1846-1848, in Polk's Cabinet, in which Buchanan had been Secretary of State; upon nomination by Buchanan he became a justice of the Supreme Court in January, 1858, and served as such till his death in 1881. Isaac Toucey of Connecticut had been Clifford's successor as Attorney General under Polk, 1848-1849, and was Secretary of the Navy under Buchanan, 1857-1861. The facts now known bear out Marcy's allegations as to Buchanan's vacillation. On February 17 Senator Bigler writes to him from Washington, "The impression is general here today that your Cabinet will be composed of the following names: to wit, Messrs. Cass, Cobb, Toucey, Jones, J. W. Thompson, Brown of Tennessee, and Floyd of Virginia." Jones, *Life and Public Services of J. Glancy Jones*, I. 349. On that same day Buchanan writes Jones that the latter will not be in the Cabinet: "I have finally determined on all the members of the Cabinet except the Attorney-General; and it may be desirable under all circumstances that I should appoint Judge Black to that place." *Ibid.*, I. 358. On February 21 he offers the Treasury to Cobb and the State Department to Cass; letter to Cobb in *Am. Hist. Assoc., Annual Report*, 1911, II. 397 (see also *ibid.*, 389, 395, 396, and Forney, *Anecdotes of Public Men*, II. 240, 421). On the 24th Toombs writes Stephens, "Cass and Cobb have been definitely appointed, none others have been, but Floyd and Jake Thompson and A. V. Brown are pretty sure, but Toucey is in danger and Jones at sea". *Annual*

More anon on this subject. When the Cabinet is formed I shall for my own satisfaction put down my opinion in regard to the men who compose it with a view to compare the result with my anticipation.

*Mon. Wash. March 17. 57.* An increasing excitement prevailed the mind of all reflecting men in regard to the "Iron rule" which Mr. B. has announced that all officers holding commissions with the four years term are to be dropped and new appts made. It is called the Boys trap usually called Figure four 4.<sup>2</sup> The rule has been most distinctly and broadly enunciated in its general application to all sections of the country [as] well as to all incumbents. I have as yet seen no elaborate defence of the rule. Mr. Buchanan has made only some general remarks in vindication of it. He declared that if he did not act upon that principle his administration would be broken down in three months.<sup>3</sup> To Mr P. Allen (Sen. of R. I.)<sup>4</sup> he said that the cause of the breakdown of Mr. V. Buren's administration was the retention of office holders. This observation can hardly d[e]rive support from historicle facts. Mr. V. B. if I rightly remember made many changes so much so that his was called the Spoils adm.<sup>5</sup> Though but a few days have elapsed since this pronounciamento was put forth it has already been much modified and sectionally abrogated. Southern men verry generally denounced it and claimed—nay more—demanded—that their section of the country should be exempt from its operation. This demand has been complied with. It has already received a further restriction in its application to the departmental officers. A very suspicious departure from the Spirit of the rule was shown by one of the first acts of its author. I refer to the case of P. Clayton.<sup>6</sup> Mr. C. was a whig and received the appt. of 2d

*Report*, 1911, II. 397, 398. On the 27th Justice Curtis writes to Ticknor, "His Cabinet is settled, with the exception of the Postmaster-General. . . . Mr. Toucey of Connecticut, Attorney-General. . . . Mr. Brown of Tennessee, Secretary of the Navy". Curtis, *Memoir of Benjamin Robbins Curtis*, I. 192-193. And it was not till March 6 that Buchanan offered the attorney-generalship to Black. *Works*, X. 114; *Reminiscences of Jeremiah S. Black*, pp. 99-100. See under March 19, *post*.

<sup>2</sup> Humorous allusion to the familiar figure-four trap. Toombs writes to Stephens, March 10, "Buck will vacate all the offices, or rather when the commissions expire consider them open". *Annual Report*, 1911, II. 398.

<sup>3</sup> As early as December 29, 1856, Buchanan had written to John Y. Mason, minister to France, "I cannot mistake the strong current of public opinion in favor of changing public functionaries, both abroad and at home, who have served a reasonable time. They say, and that too with considerable force, that if the officers under a preceding Democratic administration shall be continued by a succeeding administration of the same political character, this must necessarily destroy the party". *Works*, X. 100. (Mason was however continued at his post.)

<sup>4</sup> Philip Allen, senator 1853-1859.

<sup>5</sup> In an editorial in the *New York Herald* for March 23, we read, "It is said that that sarcastic old statesman W. L. Marcy, on hearing that the policy of rotation in office had been resolved upon by the new administration, dryly remarked, 'Well, they have it that I am the author of the office seeker's doctrine, that "to the victors belong the spoils", but I certainly should never recommend the policy of pillaging my own camp'". For Taney's disapproval, see *American Historical Review*, X. 359.

<sup>6</sup> Philip Clayton of Georgia, whose sister was married to a cousin of Secre-

Auditor from Genl Taylor. He became a No nothing and voted at the Charter election in Washington agt. Maury Dem and for Tower the No nothing Candidate.<sup>7</sup> He is an open spoken Secessionist etc. etc. Genl P.<sup>8</sup> as a kind act towards Mr. H Cobb, now Sec. of the Treasury, kept C. in during his term although Mr G. the Sec. of the Treasury<sup>9</sup> urged the removal of C. One of the first appts. of Mr B——n was that of C. to be asst Sec. of the Treasury.

Thomson, Sen. of N. J.<sup>10</sup> says he has Mr B——n's promise that the iron rule shall not be applied to his state. But what is most astounding is that the members—several of them now (17th. Mar), say that Mr B. has established no such rule, yet this very morn'g he reiterated it to Gov. Thomas coll<sup>r</sup>. of Baltimore.<sup>11</sup> That the rule is not adopted in good faith by Mr. B——n is becoming evident for there are several instances where he has applied or proposes to apply it where if it was worth any thing it should [not?] have operated. It is already turned into a sectional rule. It is already said that promised evasions of it are already contrived that are discreditable. It is said that the Coll<sup>r</sup> at Detroit is removed for the purpose of showing a deference to it but he has been promised a better situation—and that situation has been named to him.<sup>12</sup> The same is said to be the case with one of the appraisers at N. Y., *White*. W. is cared for on account of intimate social relations between his family and that of Mr. B.

Judge Black, the Atty Genl [t]his day positively denies the existence of such a rule and declares that the imputation of it to Mr. B. is a manifest act of injustice. There are hundreds now in this city to whom Mr. B. has announced the rule in a most broad and emphatic manner. He did so this very day (17th Mar.) to Gov. Thomas. He certainly declared to me when I called on him that he should "*undoubtedly*" act on that rule but at the same time said that all commissions would be permitted to expire. He has also said repeatedly (not to me) that the four years term would be applied to foreign appts. by analogy, the commissions to such officers not having any limitations.

This rule has spread alarm thro the country and has done already tary Cobb, was second auditor of the treasury from 1850 to 1857, was nominated assistant secretary of the treasury March 13, confirmed the same day, resigned in December, 1860 (*cf. Annual Report, 1911, II. 523*), and became assistant secretary of the Confederate treasury.

<sup>7</sup> William A. Maury, mayor of Washington 1852–1854, was in the latter year defeated by the Know-nothing candidate, John T. Towers, superintendent of printing, mayor 1854–1856.

<sup>8</sup> Pierce.

<sup>9</sup> James Guthrie of Kentucky, secretary of the treasury 1853–1857.

<sup>10</sup> John R. Thomson, senator 1853–1862.

<sup>11</sup> Philip Francis Thomas, governor of Maryland 1848–1851, collector of the port of Baltimore 1853–1860, secretary of the treasury under Buchanan from December 12, 1860, to January 11, 1861.

<sup>12</sup> John H. Harmon had been collector of the port of Detroit since March, 1853. On March 7, 1858, Michael Shoemaker was nominated collector in his place, but Harmon received no other appointment from Buchanan—none at least of grade sufficient to bring it into the Senate journal. The Senate, it may be mentioned, adjourned March 14, 1857.

great mischief and if practically carried out will be the source of much discord in the dem ranks.

How the notion of such a rule could get into the mind of a sound thinking man is to me utterly inconceivable. It will be abandoned but not probably till it has worked much mischief and brought signal disgrace upon its Author.

*Mar. 29.* Went to Baltimore. Dined with Reverdy Johnson<sup>13</sup> and the next day with Wilmot Johnson<sup>14</sup> *en famille*.

Gorman<sup>15</sup> told me that Mr B. said he could not give the naval Office (or navy agent) to Hammond because he had promised an office to Bowen when he was electioneering in Penna.<sup>16</sup> This was a clear admission that he disposed of the offices before his election.

Mr B. ruled out Gwinn<sup>17</sup> of Baltimore whose name was suggested for U. S. Dist Atty because he had canvassed this district to get a Delegate agt Mr. B. and said he [would] remember him during his term or as McLane<sup>18</sup> stated it to me He (G.) should not have office during his term. McL. wrote to Cobb on the subject.

*Mar. 19.* Extract from an Editorial in Union<sup>19</sup> this morning—reference to Conn.

To her position and the ability and talent of her sons, she is indebted for the place in the cabinet held by one of her truest, most reliable, and able statesmen: The name of Mr. Toucey was on all lips as soon as the election of Mr. Buchanan was made a fact; and while the claims of other States and other names were not overlooked nor underrated, the popular voice called for Mr. Toucey to be one of President Buchanan's constitutional advisers.

It is undoubtedly true that at an early period after the late Prest. Election public opinion pointed to Mr. T. as a fit person for a cabinet appt. yet Mr. B's mind vacilated for four months between Mr. N. Clifford and Mr. T. Predicated upon what Mr. B. said himself both were

<sup>13</sup> Senator 1845-1849, 1863-1868, Attorney General 1849-1850.

<sup>14</sup> A young business man of Baltimore, who in 1853 had married Margaret Schuyler Van Rensselaer of Albany.

<sup>15</sup> Perhaps Arthur P. Gorman, afterward the celebrated senator, who at this time, a youth of eighteen, was either a page in the Senate or secretary to Senator Douglas.

<sup>16</sup> Levi K. Bowen was nominated naval officer of the port of Baltimore February 23, 1838. John T. Hammond was the same day nominated collector of the port of Annapolis. There may be significance in the following sentences from a letter of Cobb to Buchanan before the election, August 14, 1856: "I am so impressed with the necessity and importance of a change in the electoral ticket of Maryland that I make another suggestion to you. I understand that there is a gentleman on the ticket by the name of Bowen (Levi K.) who will do anything you want him to do. Could you not write to him to come and see you and get him to arrange for his own place to be supplied with an old time whig?" Am. Hist. Assoc., *Annual Report*, 1911, I. 379.

<sup>17</sup> Charles J. M. Gwinn, son-in-law of Reverdy Johnson. Marcy had employed him in a special diplomatic mission in the latter part of his secretaryship.

<sup>18</sup> Probably Robert M. McLane, commissioner to China in 1853-1854.

<sup>19</sup> *The Washington Union* was the Democratic paper of the capital.

in and out of his Cabinet more than twenty times. Two days after the inauguration Mr. T. was ruled out and for the very substantial reason if it were true that he was a cold man and C. had higher social qualities. This ground of preference was assigned at [*sic*] late as ten O'Clock on the 5th of March but the pendulum had by *ten* O'clock next morning swung to the other side and Mr. T. was notified of his being selected. The course of Mr B——n in relation to T. and C. is the most remarkable instance of indecision that ever fell under my observation. Mr. B. knew them both personally; they had been in a Cabinet with him, he therefore had full means of appreciating the character of each. There was no perceptible political complication which could have embarrassed him in deciding between them. Nor was there that parity of fitness which ought to have caused one moment's hesitation.

20. *Mar.* Dined last night with the President; the new cabinet were present (except Genl C.)<sup>20</sup> for so large a party it was a very pleasant dinner. I there met for the first Judge Black, the Atty Genl. He made a favorable impression upon me. The other members of the C. appeared kindly disposed.

*Mar 24th.* In the *Union* of this day there is an article describing the gene[ra]l condition of Kansas, at the close of the late administration and denying the charge that Gov Geary retired from the governorship of that territory because he had not been properly supported by the late Adm<sup>n</sup>. Gov. G. admitted to me as he did also to Genl Pierce that he had never uttered one word of complaint—or felt one sentiment of dissatisfaction at the conduct of the late adm<sup>n</sup> towards him. He said he had had from it all the support that had been promised to him.<sup>21</sup> In the same paper there is a noticeable article upon the tender of the Prussian Mission to Jas. C. Clay son of the late distinguished H. Clay.<sup>22</sup> This would be well were it not for its awkward attendants. A democrat of long standing and eminent service to his party and country<sup>23</sup> was to be removed to make place for an *old-line whig* who, notwithstanding his efforts in the late presidential campai[g]n “*has not proven faithless to his pledges as an old line whig*”. In the notice of this tender of the Prussian mission to Mr Clay Mr B——n's election is glorified as a triumph over sectionalism and *proscription*. It was certainly a triumph over sectionalism but so far as Mr B has opened himself, his election appears to be the triumph of *Proscription*, and *proscription* in its very worst form. Every issue of the *Union*—the one now before me—contain quite a list of democrats removed from office. It is true that they are in most instances filled by democrats but the principle upon which this policy is based is inconceivably mischievous to the party, and the object for which it has been adopted most discreditable to its author. If it

<sup>20</sup> Cass, secretary of state.

<sup>21</sup> John W. Geary of Pennsylvania was governor of Kansas from September, 1856, to March 4, 1857. “We are not unaware that some alleged reports of conversations with Governor Geary have been published, which seem somewhat to conflict with his valedictory address; but this conflict may be the mere result of misunderstanding, and the address itself is the best authority.” *Washington Union*, March 24, editorial.

<sup>22</sup> James B. Clay, who had just been elected to Congress as a Democrat. The article in the *Union* is taken from the *Lexington (Ky.) Statesman*.

<sup>23</sup> Peter D. Vroom, ex-governor of New Jersey, envoy to Prussia 1853–1857.

was a sound principle it would operate benignly every where. Mr. B. after promulgating his policy as a general rule of action to be applied every where at once recoiled from the threatened mischief. He then declared it was to have a sectional application—a noble illustration of his election being a triumph over sectionalism—it was a rule for the north—not for the south.

Then a further qualification was made and certain regions in the north were to be exempted from its operation. Shortly after personal exceptions were admitted. Finally it turns out to be a *mode* to disguise the real motive of action. The offices were made the sport of sheer personal caprice. Mr. B. had an arrear of old debts to pay, and it would have been more manly to have paid them without attempting to throw any disguise over the mode of liquidation. Genl Cass also had quite as many of such debts as Mr. B. Mr B's were *prefered* and the Genl's *deferred*, obligation[s]. No one could well complain of this order of liquidation but it must be admitted that the Genl. is placed in an awkward Situation. Some of his most devoted friends are remorselessly stripped of office to make places for the friends of the President but Genl C. proves himself to be an easy enduring man, and as it seems selfwise, regarding his own security to that of peculiar friends. I shall be curious to learn how the act. will foot up when it is closed.

*Wash. Mar. 25th. 57.* The cast of the N. Y. appts was announced yesterday. It is difficult to perceive how a worse cast could have been made. The only reappt. of Fowler,<sup>24</sup> was expected, but why he should have been spared no one can, or rather no one *will* tell. Shell<sup>25</sup> is a stupid fellow, but generally thought to be honest. He wont cheat himself but has hardly sufficient capacity to prevent others from doing so. The appearance of Geo. N. Sanders name for any office is a wonderment but for one where the opportunity and temptation for frauds is the greatest is shocking. After who [what] he caused to be published agt Mr. B. and Genl C. in the Dem. Review in '52' (in the Feby no. I think) it is surprising that either should have thought him worthy of a responsible govt.<sup>26</sup>

See the Dem. Review.

Rynders for Marshall!!! It is believed that Birdsall is to be Naval Officer. Low vilany seems to be current. Man Hart—!!<sup>27</sup> What are

<sup>24</sup> Isaac V. Fowler, postmaster at New York City, afterward a defaulter.

<sup>25</sup> Augustus Schell, who for several years had been chairman of the state Democratic committee, now appointed collector of the port of New York.

<sup>26</sup> George N. Sanders was appointed navy agent at New York. He had been editing the *Democratic Review* in the interest of the Young Democracy. The articles here referred to are "Eighteen-Fifty-Two and the Presidency", especially pp. 9-12, in the January number of the *Democratic Review* (n. s., I.), "The Presidency and the Review", in the February number, pp. 182-188, and "Congress, the Presidency and the Review", March, especially pp. 207, 219-221. They reflect more on Butler and Marcy, however, than on either Buchanan or Cass. Sanders, a Kentuckian, was afterward a Confederate agent in Europe. Am. Hist. Assoc., *Annual Report*, 1899, p. 274.

<sup>27</sup> Isaiah Rynders was appointed marshal for the southern district of New York, Ausburn Birdsall naval officer, Emmanuel B. Hart (M. C. 1851-1853) surveyor of the port.

we coming to—or rather what have we come to!! More hereafter—

(Private and confidential)

WASH. Mar. 27th 57.<sup>28</sup>

*My dear Sir:*—I never omit a duty without having a good excuse to offer. I ought have written to you before this time but while doing so I should have omitted something else which ought to have been done. The President was with me until day before yesterday and while he was here my house was thronged by his numerous warm hearted friends anxious to pay their kind respects to him and his most excellent Lady. Nothing could have been more gratifying to me that [than] this clear manifestation of regard to Mr. and Mrs Pierce. I venture to say no occupants of the White House ever left Washington with such deep feelings of affection from the people of this city. I do not think there is more than one man in all the Old North State that can fairly pretend to enter into competition with Genl Pierce into [in] the art of win[n]ing hearts.

Strange things have been enacted here during the last three weeks. Pierce men are hunted down like wild beasts. If a northern or free state man holding an office was at Cincinnati and there favored the nomination of Genl. Pierce [he] is under the sentence of death to be executed at any time and at furthest at the close of his term. Office holders who attended the convention at C. and favored the nomination of Mr. Buchanan are generally shoved up stairs but those who favored Genl. P. are rudely kicked down stairs. *Know nothings* are not only better liked and better used than Pierce-men, because some of them have been appointed to respectable and responsible offices. The rule of rotation is resorted to for a purpose too bad to be openly avowed. Besides this rule, another equally wise seems to be acted on. Where there are factions in our party the offices are very generally given to minor factions. This is believed to be the case in Boston, Baltimore New York etc.

*April 2d. 57.* It is determined that Genl. Thomas shall be removed from his position as Asst. Secretary of State.<sup>29</sup> The manner of it should be regarded by Genl. Cass as personally offensive to him, and would not have been adopted if there had been the slightest desire to be respectful.

At first Genl C. told Genl T. that he was as safe in his position as the Emperor of Russia was upon his throne. But afterwards Genl C. was discovered to be wavering, and he suggested to me that he should be obliged to get some one who could have free intercourse with the man at

<sup>28</sup> In Professor Sperry's manuscript, this letter is pasted into the diary; in the Library of Congress copy, it is marked, "Letter not finished, and with no address—probably to the Ex-Sec. of the Navy, James C. Dobbin, N. C." (secretary in the late Cabinet, 1853-1857).

<sup>29</sup> John A. Thomas, for a time chief engineer of the state of New York, was employed from April, 1853, to January, 1854, as advocate of the United States in London under the claims convention of 1853 (Moore, *International Arbitrations*, I. 403), and from November 1, 1855, to April 4, 1857, was assistant secretary of state.



the W. House, and suggested Mr. Appleton.<sup>30</sup> But I had reason afterwards to suspect that was a freek which had passed off, for it was discovered that Mr. A. knew nothing about such an arrangement and was averse to it.

Yesterday Genl C. told Genl T. in presence of Mr Hunter the C C.<sup>31</sup> had [that] he (Genl T.) must take charge of the heavy business of the Dept., must draw the Despatches, etc.—assigning as a reason that *he was* too old for such labor. This Genl. T. supposed, as well he might, settled his position but the next mornng Genl. C. informed the Asst. that Mr. A. was to take his place. This *had* been arranged, as it is now ascertained, at the White House and thro. Clifford without consultation or the knowledge of Genl C. Appleton dined on Sunday with Mr Buchanan and the project of displacing Thomas by Appleton was then suggested to A. He was not inclined to favor it. But it was pressed upon him and Clifford was employed to deal with Appleton on the subject. Finally Ap<sup>n</sup> yielded to it. Then it was opened to Genl C. but not until after he had conversed with Thomas and spoke of his taking charge of the Dept. If the Genl continues he will be called on to submit to what a high spirited man would regard as an indignity—and many of them too, and at last will be driven from his high position. Submission will not save his place no more than it will save his reputation.

April 4.<sup>32</sup> Monypenny, the late Com<sup>r</sup> of Indian Affairs called on me this mornng, and stated Thompson's case. His claim agt the (Menomines) is founded in fraud. The manner in which it was paid shows that the Treasury has passed into *loose hands*. The payt. was a very indiscreet act and I think the case will make some noise.

"*The Buchanan Rule.*" Apl 6th. The stereotipe reason which Mr. B. gives for his rule is that "*if Mr Van Buren had adopted the rule of rotation he would have been reelected*". I pass without remark the implication that Mr. B——n is not very stable upon the *one term* principle. The history and the logic appear to be worthy of some consideration. Mr. Van B—— did make removals,<sup>33</sup> not it is true in the slashing manner

<sup>30</sup> John Appleton of Maine, a cousin of Mrs. Pierce, M. C. 1851–1853, had been secretary of legation to Buchanan in London from March to November, 1855, and was assistant secretary of state from April 4, 1857, to June 8, 1860.

<sup>31</sup> Chief clerk. William Hunter, who was in the service of the Department of State from 1829 to 1886, was chief clerk from 1852 to 1866.

<sup>32</sup> In Professor Sperry's manuscript this is in another place, but it is here restored to its chronological position, which it occupies in the Library of Congress copy.

George W. Manypenny was commissioner of Indian affairs from 1853 to 1857. The claim here alluded to was that of Richard W. Thompson of Indiana, M. C. 1841–1843, 1847–1849. He had undertaken legal services for the Menominees, under a contract assigning to him one-third of what he should recover under their claim against the government. A provision for the payment, with a certain proviso, was passed in an appropriation act of March 3, 1855, but the proviso was found to be missing from the engrossed act. The matter was vigorously debated in the Senate, August 1, 4, 8, 1856; see *Cong. Globe*, 34 Cong., 1 sess., pp. 1883–1890, 1901–1903, 1930–1934, and the papers in 34 Cong., 1 sess., *Sen. Ex. Doc. 72* (319 pp.). Payment was finally voted. See also Am. Hist. Assoc., *Annual Report*, 1916, II. 209–210, Cobb to Hunter.

<sup>33</sup> Van Buren made twenty-six removals of civil officers, Buchanan 197. Fish, in Am. Hist. Assoc., *Annual Report*, 1899, I. 75, 81.

the business is now done—not to carry out a secret purpose too unworthy to be avowed, and therefore to be covered up under a Genl Rule adopted for a sinister end and never intended to be applied in *good faith*. But a word or two on the conclusiveness of this Presidential logic.

All dem. office holders are to be removed at the end of *four years* in order to bring the Dem. party [to the conclusion(?)] that the man who establishes this rule ought to continue in his office *Eight years*. A less profound man than Mr Buchanan would have concluded that the man who practised upon the four year rule would be likely to have it applied to himself. Mr. V B's administration was alleged to have established the "Spoils doctrine". How could Mr. B. say he erred egregiously in retaining incumbents in office. A man will talk wildly and inconsequently when he is hunting up false reasons for his conduct.

(Private and)  
(Confidential)

WASH. April, 6th, 57.<sup>34</sup>

*My dear Sir:*

As I am the last lingerer of the late administration I have presumed to suppose that a line from me would not be unacceptable. I have maintained friendly relations with Genl. Cass though he is evidently under some contrain[t] in communicating with me. I think he begins to feel what others clearly see, that his condition is not what it ought to be or what he is bound to make it if he intends to sustain his reputation with the country. He ought to have resisted the *rotatory rule* for he could not but know it was a sham in its very conception, but he sustained it and saw it applied in its first working to his long tried and most devoted friends. During former canvassers [*sic*] those who were most efficient in supporting Genl Cass and of course most effective in opposition to Mr. B——n were selected as the first victims and they think *as I know* that it was unseemly in the Genl to stand by and applaud their sacrifice. I tell you (in confidence of course) that the Genl. is not among his friends. The chief of the White House expressed strong doubts of the Genl's competence before he assigned him the S. Dept. He was prepared if not predisposed to find him incompetent and the recent arrangements show that in his own judgment this anticipation has been realized. Thomas who was regarded as "one of Marcy's legacies to the new administration" has been, as I all along supposed he would be, displaced and Appleton has taken the vacant place. It is generally supposed—the Genl himself supposes—that what is done, after the change, at the Dept. will be better received at the W. House. It is not the work, but the worker, that is to be considered in passing upon its acceptableness. The Genl's colleagues are not so coy as might be expected in chiming in with the W. House. I think the Genl's *selfconfidence* is a good deal impaired. Cardinals don't care how old the Pope is.

The appointments are better recd *ostensibly* than they deserve to be. The Cerberuses of the press are sopped,—letter-writers have access to the W. H. and some of the Dept[s]. The day for free comment has not

<sup>34</sup> This letter is pasted into the diary, with the annotation, "I wont send this letter". It is accompanied by an envelope addressed, "Hon. Robert McClelland, Detroit". McClelland had been Secretary of the Interior in Pierce's Cabinet, 1853–1857.

arrived. I know you have taken up an opinion that I am amiable, and as I think I deserve it I will not hazard the loss of it with you by fully opening my view of the state of things here. Here the late administration is a despised thing in official circles. Those who held office under it and are anxious to hold on ignore it. I meet with some shining faces but with more frowning brows. I am forbearing and merciful; I injure no man by openly claiming him as *my friend* or *the friend of the late adm<sup>n</sup>*. I am packing up and shall be off and as I believe with the cordial approbation of the new-comers. If they do as well as I wish they may do, they will be fortunate men.

Yours truly

W. L. MARCY.

Hon Robt McClelland.

*April 9th.* Met Hulseman, Austrian Minister,<sup>35</sup> in F. St., who informed me that Mr. Buchanan sent for him on the subject of his letter to the Sec. of State relative to the seizure of his servant the "poor (colored) woman".

After great labor Genl. Cass failed to make a reply to Mr. Hulseman's letter that would meet the views of Mr. Buchanan. So he (Mr. B.) got over the difficulty by getting Mr. Hulseman to withdraw his note and substitute one of a different character.

Hulseman expressed to me an opinion that Genl. Cass was to be merely *locum tenens*, and that Appleton, under the direction and supervision of Mr. Buchanan, was to manage foreign Affairs. He said Cass was too old for the duties of the Department.

*April 14th.* Mr. Bille, the Chargé from Denmark,<sup>36</sup> called on me this morning to pay his respects, before leaving Washington, and informed me that he had just signed the Treaty or Convention relative to the abolition of "The Sound Dues". The Convention executed was the one drafted by me, and he expressed his regret that he had not received full powers to execute the same before I left the State Department. He said no alteration was made in my Department<sup>37</sup> but a formal one in relation to the time or mode of its taking effect. I can hardly imagine that there can be a question hereafter as to whom the credit of this important measure is due. Though there had formerly been some efforts to get rid of this embarrassment to commerce, they seemed to have been abandoned before the inauguration of Genl. Pierce's administration. The subject was earnestly and perseveringly pursued by it. The administration was much abused abroad, and some at home, for embarking in this measure. The press of England was at one time very severe upon me for having taken up the subject, but when, finally, the measure was brought near a close, it frankly acknowledged that, for this great advan-

<sup>35</sup> The Chevalier Hülsemann was Austrian chargé d'affaires 1841-1855, minister resident 1855-1863. Cass's note to Hülsemann, in the case here alluded to, is in Moore's *Digest*, IV. 658-659.

<sup>36</sup> Torben Bille, chargé d'affaires (1852) 1854-1857. The convention alluded to below is that of April 11, 1857; the United States had dissociated itself from the negotiations resulting in the general Sound Dues treaty of March 14, and had made a separate convention.

<sup>37</sup> Draft?

tage to commerce, the world was indebted to the course of their transatlantic cousins etc.

*April 17th.* I have spent the last three days in Baltimore, staid at the house of a friend John C. Brune,<sup>38</sup> and never, at any place, had I more hearty welcome. I found a good deal of undeveloped dissatisfaction at the course of the new administration in regard to the offices. The cases of Thomas and Wharton are truly hard ones. They were good officers, and had given general satisfaction, and were both under circumstances which made their continuance very desirable to each of them.

*April 18th.* I had a brief interview with Genl. Cass to day, and he made a more favorable impression on me than he has at any other time. He conversed with me on the New Granadian difficulty. He told me the same as he had done in regard to the affairs with China, that they intended to occupy precisely the same ground taken by the late administration. The passage across the Isthmus at Panama will be guarded by our ships of war, not only at Aspinwall (Colon), Panama, but, if need be, along the line of the Rail Road.<sup>39</sup>

The reply of the Government of New Granada to our propositions, is an offensive rejection of them. That Government declares its intention to execute the tonnage law, and the extortious assessment on the mail matter across the Isthmus. This government ought not to submit to either. But what surprised me more than any thing else was a counter demand of \$150,000 for damages on account of the riot on the 15th of April last.<sup>40</sup> It would seem from the course of that Government that it intends to provoke a war with the United States.

The allowance of the Thompson claim is likely to damage the administration more than a little. The defence of the act was a feeble one. It is alleged, by way of repelling the charge that it was done under improper influences, that claimant had not moved in the matter since the incoming of the present administration. Why should they have so promptly have taken up a case already overruled?—and as it was a transaction in relation to Indian affairs, why was the gentleman (Many-penny) at the head of Indian bureau passed by unconsulted or noticed in relation to it?

The Bully Brooks case [code] seems to have been transferred from the Halls of Congress to the Departments. A connection of Clayton the Asst. Sec., said to be a clerk in the Department, appointed after the transaction, knocked down George C. Herrick who wrote a letter which was published in the Herald reflecting upon the allowance of the claim to Thompson.<sup>41</sup> This is not a way of refuting charges of official delinquency which will be likely to allay suspicion of the *bona fides* of the transaction.

The fact that the ruffian Sayer was, at the time of the outrage, a clerk in the Department, or was appointed to a clerkship the same day

<sup>38</sup> An eminent Baltimore lawyer.

<sup>39</sup> See Moore, *Digest*, III. 19–20.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, III. 34–36; *International Arbitrations*, II. 1361–1384.

<sup>41</sup> The letter, from George R. Herrick, clerk of the Senate committee on finance, is in the *New York Herald* of April 13. It reflects on Clayton because Indian accounts had been in his province as second auditor of the treasury. The assault occurred on the 17th. *Herald*, April 18.

of the outrage, very much worsens the case, for the Sec. or his assistant. If this clerk is not removed, the Sec. and his Asst. must stand before the public as approvers of the outrage. Suspicion will carry the matter further; it will charge them as having instigated the attack upon Herrick.

My knowledge of the qualities of Mr. Buchanan's mind never allowed me to hope that he would display much skill in managing the personal affairs of the government, but he has gone beyond the limit fixed by my apprehensions, in his maladroitness.

His first step—the attempt to foist Forney upon the legislature of his State for a U. S. Senator, was a signal blunder. The bitter fruits of the mistake, following so quickly, ought to have taught him a salutary lesson.

Pennsylvania had been generous towards Mr. B.—generous to such a degree that he owed it every possible return of kindness and consideration.

No one pretends that any considerable number of its legislators thought Mr. F. a fit man to be sent into the U. S. S., and most of the democrats were offended by Mr. B's. gross attempt at dictation—a few so much so as to revolt. Hence the catastrophe. I do not justify the revolvers, but I do censure the bungling course of Mr. Buchanan. Considering his long experience, the error can properly be adduced as evidence of an original defect of character—a want of the spirit of discernment, but this trait was still more prominently developed in the adoption of his "*rotary rule*". This feature of his policy deserves a fuller comment than I have now time to bestow upon it, and a more severe rebuke than I am now willing to administer. If it was adopted, in good faith, it evinced greater weakness than I am willing to ascribe to him; but if it was adopted, as it is now generally believed, as a subterfuge, and to be used as a reason for doing acts for which the true motives would not bear the light, then it leaves a soil on his character which must be noticeable whenever that character is looked at. The real motive will be—nay now is very generally—patent.

Every democrat removed will say he has suffered under a vicious rule, generally reprobated, adopted without common sense, but partially executed, and never intended to be applied in good faith. What its effect will be upon the party, remains to be seen. That it will be mischievous no sound thinking man doubts, but the extent of the mischief remains to be disclosed.

The organization of the Cabinet, but more particularly the vacillation and sudden changes of mind in relation to certain selections, astonished every body. I confess it greatly exceeded my anticipations. I was satisfied that he wanted, in no inconsiderable degree, decision of character, but I dreaded more than this defect, the capriciousness of his judgment. He had likes and dislikes, which seemed to be causeless, or, if not entirely causeless, evinced a considerable degree of waywardness. This class of his judgments seemed to be those which he most persistently adhered to.

Mr. Buchanan, as I have heard from an authentic source, makes it a matter of complaint against me that I kept back from him the infor-

mation of Mr. Crampton's complicity in the enlistment business.<sup>42</sup> In his suspicion on that subject he is entirely mistaken, and that he is so he might have been convinced, if he had had the fairness of bringing on an explanation on the subject. He undoubtedly supposes that we had an earlier knowledge of that fact than we had. Though Crampton was suspected of a connivance in what was going on, it was not believed that any proof of his complicity could be obtained, until a late period in the development. There was nothing disclosed against Crampton until August. This happened while I was absent from Washington, at Old Point Comfort, Virginia. I was sent for in consequence of what had come out against him. The dispatch implicating him was written shortly after my return, but by reason of the President's absence at the Virginia Springs, it was not agreed on and sent to Mr. C. until the 5th of September; but before that date I had informed Mr. Buchanan, by a private letter, that C. was implicated. My private letters will show that fact. I do not recollect the date of my letters on the subject, but it was previous to the despatch to C. of the 5th of Sept. and a copy of that despatch was at once forwarded to Mr. Buchanan.

<sup>42</sup> John F. T. Crampton was British minister from 1852 to May 28, 1856, when he was dismissed by the United States government on the ground that he had taken part in violations of the neutrality of the United States through British enlistments. Moore, *Digest*, IV. 533-535.